the shrine during festivals and in large number during Dattatreya Jayanthi.

During the Datta Jayanthi celebrations on December 22, 1999, the State Government has made suitable arrangements for maintenance of peace. The festival passed off peacefully except one incident of stone throwing by sôme miscreants. The Centre is in touch with the Government of Karnataka who have been requested to take appropriate steps to resolve the issue and to maintain peace and communal harmony.

Conversion of Buddhists to Islam

1420. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the news-item titled "centre urged not to accept J&K Government's reports on autonomy" as reported in 'The Hindustan Times' dated 4th February, 2000;

(b) whether it is a fact that conversions of Buddhists to Islam are carried out in Leh district in a planned manner; and

(c) if so, what immediate steps Government propose to check the conversions from one faith to another?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI I.D. SWAMI): (a) Yes Sir, the Government are aware of the media report in this regard.

(b) and (c) The allegation about conversions of Buddhists to Islam has emanated from the incidents of marriages contracted by Buddhist girls with Muslim boys on two occasions. No coercion has been used and the parties have entered into the marriage on their own free will. In one case, the girl has been restored to her parents. The local administration is seized of the matter and necessary steps are being taken to keep watch on the situation.